

# New Ohio abortion rules close decades-old clinic

Pro-lifers cheer end of 'late-term abortion mill'



*Dorothea Langsam, an attorney for the Lebanon Road Surgery Center of Sharonville, Ohio, announces during a news conference, Wednesday, Aug. 20, 2014, at her law office in Cincinnati, that the Cincinnati-area abortion clinic has ended its fight with the state ... more >*

By Cheryl Wetzstein - *The Washington Times* - Thursday, August 21, 2014

Supporters of a Cincinnati area clinic that is ending its surgical abortion services Friday say it is the latest victim of a political attack — and that Ohio

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A state law enacted in 2013 “seems like a deliberate Catch-22,” said lawyer Dorothea Langsham, who represents the Women’s Med Center of Cincinnati. Its Lebanon Road Surgery Center in Sharonville, Ohio, is expected to cease offering surgical abortions as of 4 p.m. Friday.

The ambulatory surgical clinic had been operating for more than 30 years in the Cincinnati area and was one of the few — if not the only — to offer abortions up to 22 weeks of gestation.

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However, it could not fulfill the state law requiring a hospital transfer agreement, and the state later declined to renew the “variance,” or exception, that had been permitting the clinic to operate.

Pro-life groups cheered the closing, both because the Sharonville clinic was a “late-term abortion mill” and because it was led by Dr. Martin Haskell, the physician known to have popularized a late-term abortion procedure. Congress has since outlawed partial-birth abortion in most circumstances.

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“This appears to be the end of a long battle to protect life in Greater

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"We are endlessly grateful that an abortion facility is being held accountable to the law and health and safety standards," Katherine McCann, a spokeswoman for the pro-life group, said Thursday.

Already four of Ohio's 13 abortion clinics have closed, and the loss of services in Sharonville affects women in Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky, said Kellie Copeland, executive director of NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio.

If more clinics close, some women will be forced to travel many miles for abortions while others "may turn to dangerous measures" — and "that can't be what's best for public health," she said. "What's happening here is politics."

The updated state law requires abortion clinics or its doctors to have written transfer agreements with private — not publicly funded — hospitals in case of patient emergencies.

The Sharonville clinic was unable to acquire such agreements, and the Ohio Department of Health informed Women's Med in January that its "variance" was not renewed.

A lengthy court battle ensued. On Aug. 15, however, Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas Judge Jerome J. Metz Jr., upheld the Ohio Department of Health orders to shut down the clinic.

Women's Med later said it would not appeal Judge Metz's ruling. His order lifting the stay on the health department order goes into effect Friday.

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Thursday.

The Sharonville clinic may remain open for some services, the attorney said. Clients seeking abortions may come in to fulfill their 24-hour pre-abortion counseling requirement, and then go to Women's Med's other clinic in Dayton, Ohio, for the abortion. However, as an ambulatory surgical clinic, the Sharonville clinic's "main business is ceasing," Ms. Langsham said.

In an opinion article in the Cincinnati Enquirer this week, Dr. Haskell said Ohio Gov. John Kasich, a pro-life Republican, was imposing his "personal values on the broader population."

There are 1 million women in the Cincinnati area and none of them "will have the choice to have an abortion if our governor continues to carry out his mission," Dr. Haskell wrote.

He added that the Women's Med clinic, which operated for 32 years in Clifton, a suburb of Cincinnati, and then relocated to the Sharonville address, was never cited for "inappropriate patient treatment in more than 35 years of operation."

But Mr. Gonidakis, the pro-life leader, said that "if a facility fails to ensure that they are operating at the legally required health and safety standards to protect women, then certainly they should close. Ohio law affords no loopholes for abortion facilities."

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